

The Only Heaven I'll Be Sent To Is When I'm Alone With You by deandratb

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Summary:

Unfinished stories from Stranger Things that may or may not be pulled out of this collection and completed someday. Read at your own risk; I just needed them to have a more-organized home.

1. Witness to Your Empty Heart

Author's Note:

These are INCOMPLETE stories. These scenes have been sitting in my drafts waiting for me to finish them, and have not been betaed, so please keep that in mind if you read.

You're welcome to give your opinion and I don't mind if you ask me to return to working on the ones you like--just be aware that I might never do so. :)

Summary for the Chapter:

Midway through spending her night with an axe, Joyce discovers Hopper asleep in her driveway.

Notes for the Chapter:

I will never get over Hopper settling into his truck for the night while Joyce goes for an axe. Both moments seem so iconic and revealing for the characters: his quiet devotion, her fierce determination. All I want is for both of them to know how the other spent that night, thus this concept.

Hopper circled her property on foot once around midnight. Just to reassure himself that all was well, just to be certain.

Joyce was asleep on the couch; he saw her through the window when the brightly-lit living room got his attention.

Unless he was hallucinating, she was sleeping with an axe. A goddamn axe, her fingers keeping a death grip on the handle while she lay unconscious.

There was a part of him that wanted to go in, ease the axe out of her hands, cover her with a blanket, and keep watch at her side. To let her rest easier, if not well.

That was the crazy part of him, and he had plenty of practice ignoring it. Joyce Byers was talking to her missing son through Christmas lights, and taking weapons to bed.

Clearly, his impulse to stick close was a good one. Somebody had to look out for her--she was in no shape to do it herself.

He went back to his truck.

The nightmares woke her. After only two hours sleep, she couldn't will herself into more.

Pacing the living room, Joyce caught the glint of metal in her driveway. If it weren't for that, she never would have found Hopper, sleeping awkwardly in the cab of his truck, hat over his eyes.

It should have annoyed her, the lack of trust, of belief. His need to protect her from herself more than from any monster.

Instead, it was kind of endearing, the Chief snoring outside her home...keeping watch, guarding her and Jonathan.

It was so out of character for Hopper, so strangely sweet, that she knocked on the window before she could think about it too much.

He jolted awake, and she saw the twitch of his right shoulder that telegraphed him reaching for his gun. Then he saw her, tipping his hat back out of the way, and relaxed.

"Everything all right?" Hopper asked through his half-open window.

"Yeah. Yeah, we're fine. I just-I saw you out here, and I thought..." She stepped back a little. "Come inside, Hop."

"Nah. I should head home."

"If you were going to be at home, you would be," she pointed out. "Come on."

Hopper sighed, heavily, but he locked the vehicle up behind him and

walked in with her.

“Couldn’t sleep?”

“No, I did. A little.” Joyce shrugged. “It’s too much.”

“I know.”

He would, she remembered. He probably understood what she was going through better than most.

It was such a firm unspoken rule, never discussing his daughter in his presence, that sometimes Joyce honestly forgot about the life he’d had before he came back to Hawkins. Sometimes, he just seemed like a hopeless, indifferent drunk for no reason at all.

Who would she be? The thought hit her like a gut punch as she shut the front door behind them. If she didn’t find Will, if she couldn’t bring him home...if she was too late--who would she end up as?

With that moment of searing clarity, Hopper suddenly made a little more sense to her.

Joyce sat back down on the couch, but he hovered, looking around at the lights and the slashes of black paint she’d used to form the alphabet. His eyes landed on the axe at her side.

“Need firewood?”

“What? No.” She moved the axe off the cushion beside her, clutching it again like he might try to take it away. Just another item to add to the ‘crazy’ list, she knew. But this was Hopper; it was far too late to expect him to think she was sane.

And as long as he helped her find Will, it didn’t matter.

“You can sit,” she reminded him.

He settled where the axe had been, looking entirely out of place on her beat up couch.

“So, what about you? Couldn’t sleep at home?”

Hopper shook his head. "Could've. Didn't."

"Would you like to buy a noun?"

He grinned at her, shaking his head again. "What, you wanna talk? It's not exactly the best time for that."

"Come on, Hop. I can't sleep. There's--there's so many hours until morning. I'm going crazy here."

"Fine." He thought it over, trying to find something less fraught they could talk about. "How's work?"

"Work sucks."

Hopper turned toward her a little. "Yeah?"

"Yeah." Remembering the axe in her hands, which was now pointed at him, Joyce set it aside. "You know, Donald tried to give me a hard time about getting an advance so I could look for Will?"

"No. Doesn't surprise me, though."

"Well, it surprised me! I've worked there for most of Will's life--and even when the boys were sick, or I was, I busted my ass for that place."

"I get it," he replied. "I meant, Donald's always been a tightwad. His wife likes to gripe to Flo about never getting a vacation no matter how the store's doing. I'd feel bad for her except they pretty much deserve each other."

"She never liked you," Joyce agreed with the slightest of watery smiles.

"All I did was steal a candy bar!" He protested. "I was five!"

"She never liked Jonathan, either. Called him a 'little criminal' to my face the first time Lonnie left. I hope she never gets a vacation."

"I'll drink to that." Hopper raised his eyebrows hopefully. "Got a beer for me?"

“Aren’t you on duty?”

“No.”

“So you were in my driveway...”

“Just ‘cause.”

“Right.” Joyce barely avoided rolling her eyes.

It was strange how some people took you back. She couldn’t even talk to Lonnie on the phone without slipping into her role as the Responsible Parent, the nagging, joyless bad cop to Lonnie’s deadbeat dad.

And whenever she spent any real time with Hopper, she was a teenager again, smoking between classes and pretending not to notice him when he walked by.

Becoming an adult, and a mom, just put a heavy filter of exhaustion over those memories. At some point while he was away Hopper had learned to control that short fuse of his--it was harder now to imagine him starting a fight for the hell of it, like he used to--but he was still carelessly cool.

She got up and went to the fridge for his beer. It wasn’t the worst idea, Joyce decided, grabbing a second one for herself. What harm could it do, with Hopper there and Will silent and Jonathan grieving? There was no chance of relaxing, let alone sleeping, until Will was home, anyway.

“So,” Hopper said, taking the beer with a nod of thanks, “I heard Jonathan went to see Lonnie.”

“Yeah. He didn’t tell me until he got back--I knew it was a waste of time.”

“I told him not to go.”

Joyce shrugged. “He only listens when he wants to.”

“Gee, I wonder where he gets that from.”

Her laugh had a rusted quality; it was nice to hear just the same. "I wonder."

"With Will..." Hopper wasn't sure how to broach the subject, but he knew somebody had to ask. "You said that Lonnie, he called him names. Was he--I mean, did he ever..."

"God, Hopper--no! You think I would've let him--let anyone, hurt Will?"

He knew exactly what to expect with Joyce, most of the time. Her reaction didn't faze him. "No, I don't think you would, not if you knew. But you kicked Lonnie out that last time, and I know how he was."

"No. He never. He's an asshole, and I wanted to smack the smirk off his face more than once...but if he had ever laid a hand on Will, you would know. He'd be missing that hand."

"Okay. Okay." He sipped his beer, waited while she drank from hers. She swallowed it like oxygen, and Hopper wished there was more he could do. "I had to ask, y'know?"

"I know."

"Want me to go?"

She sniffled. "No."

Nodding, Hopper took another drink.

"Why would I want that?"

"I don't know. You should sleep."

Joyce set her beer down, a little too hard. "Everyone wants me to sleep. Like that's going to fix something. Like I'm going to be unconscious, when my little boy--" her voice broke and she stopped for a moment to breathe. "When Will is out there, he's out there, Hopper, I know that he is. I can feel it. And he's scared and he needs me and the last thing I want to do is sleep."

She looked over and saw him watching her. "I know you think I'm crazy. I know you don't believe me. But Will isn't dead. He's not."

"Okay."

Notes for the Chapter:

Chapter title borrowed from "No Love Lost" by Joy Division.

2. She Loves Like Sleep To The Freezing

Summary for the Chapter:

Hopper tries his best to stay away, only to have Joyce decide it's her turn to help him.

Notes for the Chapter:

This will hopefully get finished one day; it's meant to be a silly wish fulfillment sequel to [this story](#).

When Hopper decides to stop guarding the Byers house, he means it. He focuses all his self-control on the matter.

He makes it a week.

For five days, he drags himself into the station after dozing in patches on the couch, tossing and turning through the nightmares. On the third day, when he wakes up in tears, he gets as drunk as he can manage, but it doesn't make anything better.

He isn't sure what he wants, what he needs, but he needs...something. And it's not at the bottom of a bottle.

On day seven, the end of his weekend, Joyce brings him leftovers. "I went by the station," she tells him haltingly. "They said--well, I didn't know when you were off...or I wouldn't have stopped there first."

"They said what?"

She frowns, taking in the sight of him from his neglected beard to his mismatched socks, before answering. "That you were here. That you've been hell to deal with. What's going on, Hop? Even Flo seemed more annoyed than usual, and nothing fazes her."

Hopper sighs and steps back, letting her enter. He knows what she'll see. He wasn't exactly expecting company, and the bottles and cans and floor covered in clothes speak for themselves.

"Nothing's going on. They're just touchy."

“Flo, touchy?”

“I don’t know why.”

“Hopper.” Ignoring the coat draped over the back, Joyce sits on his couch.

“Yeah, what?”

“When everybody’s telling the same story, I don’t think you can claim they’re all having an off week.”

He shrugs. “What’s the food for?”

“Eating.”

Hopper doesn’t laugh. He doesn’t respond at all, which is when she really starts to worry.

“We had extra from dinner last night and I hadn’t seen you in a while and I just wanted to...check in, I guess. Come on, Hop, talk to me.”

“Do we really have to do this now?”

Joyce’s mouth sets into a resolved line, backed up by the flash of fire in her eyes. “I’ve got nowhere else to be.”

He finds that burn-the-world-down fierceness so inexplicably sexy that his mind shuts down before he can answer.

“Well?”

“Yeah...sorry. What was the question again?”

She huffs out a breath. “God. What is up with you this week? That’s the question. And a lot more than me are wondering, in case you haven’t noticed.”

“People need to learn to mind their own business.”

Joyce shakes her head, undaunted by his tone. It’s meant to sting, to encourage retreat, but she is raising her second teenage boy at the moment--her life requires a pretty thick skin and an even better

bullshit detector.

“People care. And you need to learn not to be an idiot.”

“Hey!”

“Well, what do you call holing up here, brushing off your friends and pretending nothing’s wrong?”

Hopper sits back, leaning away from her a little to rest his head against the wall and close his eyes. “I call it safer. And if you want to be a friend, you’ll head home, Joyce. Now.”

“Hop.” She reaches for his hand, freezing when he yanks it away. “Hopper. When you were at my house, the other day?”

Eyes still closed, he remains silent. Anything you say can be held against you, he thinks while he listens to her breathing speed up.

“Sleeping there, outside my house, in your truck...that wasn’t the first time. Right?”

“Damn it, Joyce.”

“Just answer the question. It was my driveway you were borrowing. I’m sure you were there for a reason. I have no clue what that is, but I know you. You always have a reason.”

He finally opens his eyes again, but keeps them focused on the wall across the room. He doesn’t have to look at her; her concern and frustration hover over him like a thundercloud.

Hopper is afraid that if he lets his own frustration meet hers, they won’t survive the storm.

“Were you worried about Will?”

That would be the best answer. The easy way out. Unfortunately, he is many things, but he’s never been a coward. He can’t start now.

“No.”

"Were...were you worried about me?" Her hand brushes his leg, fluttering in that nervous way of hers without actually touching him.

Always, he responds automatically in his head. Out loud, he hedges.

"Maybe."

"You know, you don't have to be. Will's fine--I'm fine. We're okay, thanks to you. I couldn't have saved him without your help, Hopper."

"Yeah. You already thanked me," he points out wearily.

"I know. But there's really no amount of thanks that could ever--"

"I get it. God, don't you think I--if I could have Sara back, if somebody could have saved her..."

This time, when she takes his hand, he lets her. Closing his eyes again, Hopper's focus narrows to the points where their fingers meet. His heart is beating there. He's so tired.

Joyce studies his face, knowing he probably wouldn't allow it if he were looking back at her. The stubble hadn't tripped alarm bells; it wasn't strange for him to care less on his days off. But the shadows under his eyes are prominent, darker than she's ever seen them.

Underneath the snark she expects, Hopper doesn't usually look this exhausted. Like his life is miles of hard road.

She knows it has been. But he used to wear it better.

"Hop, when's the last time you slept?"

His fingers twitch in hers. "What kind of question is that?"

"One I wouldn't have asked if I hadn't already guessed the answer."

She squeezes his hand before letting go. When Hopper turns to look at her, her eyes are filling.

A crying Joyce Byers is the very last thing he needs in his life at that moment, so he pushes himself up off the couch in a hurry, hoping to

move her along.

His body, running on eight-hours-ago pizza and beer and thirty minutes of shuteye, betrays him. Swaying, he feels Joyce reach out before he has to sit again. Well, fuck.

“Whoa. You need rest.”

“What do you think I was using my day off for?”

“I doubt it was for sleeping. You look like you haven’t slept in days.”

“Weeks,” he mutters toward the floor.

“Did you say a week? You haven’t sleep in a week?”

More than one, Hopper thinks. He doesn’t bother to correct her.

“You’re not going to leave it alone, are you?”

“No. I don’t think I am. You know why?”

She pauses, then answers her own question while he stares at his ceiling in resignation.

“Because you wouldn’t stop until my family was okay. Hopper, you risked your life so we would be. So that I was okay.”

Joyce rests her hand against his back. “So you can stop trying to scare me off. If you’re not going to take care of yourself, I guess I’m going to have to.”

“I don’t need mothering,” he protests.

“Like hell you don’t. Why haven’t you slept?”

He shakes his head.

“Seriously, Hopper--why won’t you just talk to me?”

Once she gets stuck on something, Joyce Byers never lets it go. Her sons are living proof of that. Besides physically removing her--and he can’t guarantee that would work, as dizzy as he is--Hopper can’t think

of another way to get her out of his house.

"I have nightmares," he admits, the confession coming out in a relieved rush. It isn't as hard as he thought it would be, telling somebody. Telling her. "I can't sleep through them."

"Oh." She nods thoughtfully, and Hopper waits for the rest.

The comforting words that always twist in his gut, despite the intentions of the people giving them to him. The hugs and touches that are supposed to soothe, that he can't quite feel. His daughter is dead, and nothing can fix it. Nothing will ever make it better.

Joyce is silent. She is still. When he sneaks a glance at her, she isn't even looking at him.

Finally, she ventures into the silence, "Well...that explains why you look like crap."

"Thanks."

"The truth hurts. What do you want me to say? I know nightmares. I have them now, and my boy's okay. I can't imagine anything I say could help."

Funnily enough, her understanding that almost does.

"No," he agrees. "I doubt it."

Joyce shifts restlessly while she thinks about it, fingers twined together in her lap. Then she tilts her head a little in his direction. "How about a nap?"

"What?"

"When I have the nightmares, what helps--well, not helps, not really, but what stops them for a little while, is Jonathan. He hears, and he comes and wakes me. I know, he shouldn't have to do that, I'm supposed to be the parent, but when I'm sleeping, I can't stop him--he's there for me. He just sits, until I fall back asleep...and it helps."

She focuses her warm, dark eyes on his; Hopper could almost drown

in them. “So, you could just...you try to get some rest, and I’ll--I’ll sit right here. You’ll know you’re not alone.”

Joyce smiles a little. “Maybe that’ll keep the monsters at bay. And if you do have a nightmare...I can wake you.”

“I don’t know.” He rubs his eyes, wishing the idea sounded less appealing than it did, that he wasn’t tempted. Wishing he wasn’t already using up so much of his self-control just being alone in a room with her.

“Hopper...let me help. It’s really the least I can do.”

Well, about that she’s right, he thinks grimly. Even if she means it differently. There are so many other things she--they--could be doing right now, that would soothe, or at least distract them both. It’d be funny if it didn’t hurt so damn much.

“You really want to spend your afternoon sitting around here while I sleep?”

Shrugging, Joyce looks around his living room. “I can’t promise I won’t try to clean the place up a little...but yeah. Jonathan’s working, Will’s with his friends. It’s not like I have a busy social calendar. And if it means you’ll be able to stand up without falling over, that’s not a bad day’s work.”

It is the worst possible idea, when he’s been trying so hard to stay away from her, but he can’t think of a coherent excuse.

Slumping a little, he mutters a reluctant, “Thanks.”

Hopper leaves Joyce perched on his couch, looking both out of place and completely comfortable, somehow at the same time. It’s almost like she fits, when he knows full well she doesn’t. She belongs anywhere else; far from his chaos.

The click of the bedroom door as it shuts behind him is reassuring, letting Hopper believe that he can shut out Joyce’s presence just that easily.

His last thought as he falls heavily into sleep is that yeah, he can’t see

or hear her now--but even through the closed door, he can still feel her.

When Hopper wakes, he can't see Joyce at first. He's back in that damn hospital room, his fingers curled around Sarah's limp ones, begging her to breathe.

It's a small mercy that his tears inside the nightmare didn't carry outside of it. But he's so deep in the darkness it takes him a minute to recognize Joyce's voice, blinking hard until her blurry figure sharpens.

Her hands are firm against his shoulders, the woodsy scent she carries drifting his way, helping to wake him up.

"Hopper, it's okay," Joyce says, her words carefully measured as she draws him back into the world. "I'm here. I'm right here."

He couldn't be farther from okay, but the second part is true: she is right there with him, only a few inches away.

The dim light in his bedroom gives Joyce a haloed glow; she's still touching him, and he's not alert enough yet to remember why that's dangerous.

Notes for the Chapter:

Chapter title borrowed from "Cherry Wine" by Hozier.

3. How Easy You Are To Need

Summary for the Chapter:

After Joyce takes drastic measures to avoid a neighbor's romantic interest, Hopper comes to her rescue.

Notes for the Chapter:

I love this concept so much and will definitely finish it someday, it's so fun. It will probably need to be a chapter fic, though. Such potential.

Hank from down the street just wouldn't stop.

It was bad enough that he liked to drop by her house, to borrow butter or a garden hose and attempt to angle his way in for coffee. But the worst was him seeing her job as an opportunity to ask her out. Incessantly.

Joyce couldn't make polite excuses to ease herself out of the conversation when she was getting paid to be nice. Hustle people along with brisk service, sure--but she would get fired if she confronted him the way she really wanted to.

Punching a customer for calling her "sweetcakes" and trying to hold her hand was not in the employee handbook.

So, faced with two growing boys on one income and a house that was slowly falling apart, Joyce opted for desperate measures: she lied.

She lied her ass off, firmly and without guilt. Anything to get Hank to leave her alone without losing her cashier-of-the-month bonus pay.

"Sorry," she told him with a smile as she bagged his groceries. "I'm flattered, but I'm actually seeing someone."

"Oh," Hank said, his face falling. "I didn't realize. Is it serious?"

Joyce swallowed her annoyance. What was it with guys--if she said

no, would he keep trying, because she wasn't involved with someone enough? "Yeah, we're exclusive," she replied, handing over his change.

That should have been the end of it. But that would have been too easy.

Joyce wasn't that lucky.

Hank asked about her boyfriend every time he came into the store after that. Friendly, casually, without fail.

"And how's your guy?"

"What's your boyfriend up to these days?"

"Do I know him?"

It was that last question, the slight challenge implied in it, that almost threw her.

She really should have thought this through, Joyce realized. They lived in Hawkins, not New York City--she couldn't claim she was dating someone in town and also tell Hank he didn't know the guy.

But she couldn't expect Hank to believe it if she said she was dating somebody from somewhere else, either. Nobody came to Hawkins; if they did, they would stick out just for being new, so that lie wouldn't work any better.

She had a decent poker face, but her tell was in the slight widening of her eyes--masked panic, just a hint of regret.

Hopper caught it, which was the only reason he paid any attention to the conversation she was having with the guy ahead of him in line.

All he wanted was a pack of smokes and a few minutes away from the station--he wasn't looking to be anybody's hero.

But Hank Cleary was getting in Joyce's space, leaning too far over the counter, and Joyce looked ready to deck him. Hopper heard Joyce stammer something about having a boyfriend, and frowned.

She wasn't seeing anybody. He would've heard the gossip from Flo if she were, whether he wanted to or not.

Which meant she was just trying to move Hank along...and he couldn't blame her. The guy was not taking no for an answer.

With a heavy internal sigh, Hopper stepped up to the counter and inserted himself into Joyce's fiction.

"Hey, hon. We still on for tonight?"

Hank was so startled he didn't even notice Joyce's jaw drop. She recovered quickly and offered Hopper a grateful smile. "Yeah, but Jonathan has to work, he can't watch Will, so you've got to come to the house."

"Sounds good," he replied, leaning over to press a light kiss to her cheek and cap off the lie.

"Oh, hey, Hank," Hopper added easily, as though he'd only just noticed him gaping at them. "Sorry to interrupt."

"That's-that's okay," Hank said, his eyes flicking back and forth between them. "I guess we were done here."

"Have a great day," Joyce told him, holding back a laugh at the expression on his face. She was grateful Hopper had helped shut him up, but it was also pretty funny how stunned he seemed by her "choice" of partners.

"I need cigarettes," Hopper told her as Hank left the store.

"Right. Just one?"

"Yep." He watched her ring him up, digging in his back pocket for a ten. "So, what time should I come over?"

"What?"

"Tonight. For our date." Hopper grinned. "He lives two houses down from you, Joyce. You don't think he'll check?"

She froze with his receipt in her hand. "Oh, god. I didn't even think about it. But he keeps casually stopping by, I wouldn't put it past him. Damn it."

"Well, what's for dinner?"

Joyce shook her head. "Seriously, Hopper, you don't have to do that--I never meant to rope you into this."

He shrugged and pocketed the pack. "It's no big deal. I conspicuously show up at your house, we eat dinner, Hank leaves you alone."

"Yeah." She bit her lip, then nodded. "Yeah, okay. Dinner's at six. I'll tell Will...I have no idea what I'll tell Will, but I'll tell him something."

"Why not tell him the truth? He's a smart kid."

She huffed out a breath. "Because I'm trying to raise him right, Hop. I can't tell him I'm lying to the whole town and then turn around and talk about honesty."

He didn't see why not, really--her son had to learn nuance sometime--but there was no point in arguing. A line was starting to form behind him, and Hopper had gotten what he came for...and then some.

"See you at six, then."

"Want me to call you, tell you what I've told Will? So we're on the same page?"

"Nah." He shot her a grin. "I'll wing it."

The woman standing next to him with a gallon of milk cleared her throat pointedly. He rolled his eyes for Joyce's benefit. "Yeah, yeah."

Hopper moved aside for Joyce's next customer, then walked around the counter to where she stood. "Might as well sell it if we're gonna," he murmured in her ear before kissing her on the top of the head and adding a louder, "Bye."

He whistled cheerfully on his way out, leaving Joyce staring after

him--along with the rest of the store.

The woman he bought them from had been irritatingly persistent in trying to drag details out of him, but Hopper decided it was worth it when Joyce opened her front door and stared helplessly at the flowers in his hand.

“What are you doing with those?”

“They’re for you.” He held them out until Joyce took them, then grinned. “What kind of fake boyfriend would I be if I didn’t go for a little romance?”

“The less confusing kind,” she replied, resisting the urge to bury her face in the cheerful purple blooms.

It had been years since anyone gave her flowers. Lonnie was never big on romantic gifts, and before that, she was still in high school--where classy gestures were even rarer. She didn’t even get a corsage from her prom date.

As a matter of fact, her sons were the only ones who had ever brought her bouquets: Jonathan picking dandelions out of the yard when he was little and presenting them to her; Will finding wildflowers in the woods after Lonnie made her cry.

Joyce was so focused on the flowers Hopper had given her, she forgot they were still standing on her porch.

Notes for the Chapter:

Chapter title borrowed from "It Will Come Back" by Hozier.

4. Fall In Love Just A Little

Summary for the Chapter:

Hopper worries that Joyce will be negatively affected by town gossip about their past.

Notes for the Chapter:

Obviously this one is a fledgling story, but it was inspired by Hopper's gossipy subordinates, and will probably be full of epic pining if I ever write it.

He's heard the rumors, though he doesn't know where they got started. It's a small town, everybody knows him and everybody knows Joyce--or they think they do, which is worse.

As far as Hopper knows, she hasn't heard them, the whispers, the insinuations. Her life is so full of her boys and her job, the endless hours of ungrateful customers, everyone pushing, pushing, pushing. She's so good at surviving it, handling it, managing it, all the while she carries herself like she has no idea.

Like she's one stiff breeze away from shattering and not being able to pick up the pieces.

It hasn't been that long since he shattered; he recognizes the look.

He does think she's pretty, always did. All the way back to high school when she was a different kind of delicate, not brittle yet but just as sad.

He has let his car stall as he passes her house, watching her with her boys, the kind of family he thought he would have forever until he didn't.

And yeah, okay, he punched a guy once, for saying Lonnie was a saint because he stayed as long as he did.

Maybe Hopper knows where the rumors are coming from, after all. But they don't bother him. The problem is, he doesn't know how long he can keep Joyce from hearing them.

Notes for the Chapter:

Chapter title borrowed from "Someone New" by Hozier.

5. Breaking All The Rules

Summary for the Chapter:

Only Hopper gets to talk about Sara...and other rules that couldn't last.

Notes for the Chapter:

I was struck in S1 by how Joyce treated Hopper's history with his daughter, and how he responded...you could see their relationship evolve by watching the difference as the season progressed. It made me want to write this little sort of character study that further linked their kids after Will is home.

No one's allowed to talk about Sara unless Hopper brings her up first. No one else gets to use her name.

By throwing Sara in his face while Will is missing, Joyce breaks that unspoken rule of survival that has kept Hopper going for so long. He knows she didn't mean to, he knows she wasn't even thinking about it, but her words cut him right open.

After they save Will, it's Hopper who brings Sara up. Technically Will died before they revived him, and Hopper can tell that no matter how hard Joyce pretends they're all back to normal, she knows it. He watched her mourn before the boy came back.

So he tries to give Joyce an opening, as the closest she'll get to someone who understands. He tells her she can talk and he'll listen.

He's not so good at talking, but he's pretty sure he could listen to Joyce Byers for hours if she needed him to.

She comes to him on a Saturday afternoon, fists clenching and unclenching, tears already filling her eyes, and he rushes her inside, locking the door like it will keep the nightmares of their past at bay. But when he asks her what happened, she's incapable of forming

words around it.

Joyce swallows hard against the threat of crying and loses the battle, helpless tears tracing down her defiant face. He brushes them away, gentling his rough hands as her eyes shut, and somehow that's their first kiss--Hopper trying to comfort her, to show her words are overrated.

They break other rules after that.

6. Open Prompt Collection

Summary for the Chapter:

A storage space for all the ideas I haven't begun writing yet but want to save for later.

Notes for the Chapter:

Most of these ideas are prompts I received via tumblr that I don't expect write anytime soon. If anything you see here inspires you to write something, please link me to it! I would love to know.

Jopper high school librarian/woodshop teacher AU: "Hey, Hopper. You get lost on your way to lunch?" Grinning, he leaned against the counter. "Nope. As a matter of fact, I'm here for a book."

Jopper + jealous, smut request

Jopper + wicked, smut request

Jopper + things you said while we were driving

Jopper, sleep intimacy + scars

Jopper, "I never knew it could be this way." after Hopper comes back from the dead and reunites with the Byers family, he helps her remodel her house, and they enjoy a quiet moment

Jopper, ways to say ILU: "Good luck."

Author's Note:

Story title borrowed from "Take Me To Church" by Hozier.